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Letters

Intelligence Community Resists Quality Control

To the Editor:

A Dec. 3 news article describes me as "a leading proponent of the argument that [the C.I.A.] has been penetrated by a Soviet mole, or high-level double agent." Where did you get such a notion?

Since I have no basis for knowing whether or not there is a mole in the C.I.A., I have never said there is. I have said, since I know it intimately, that the U.S. intelligence community has no system for interdisciplinary checking of the reliability of sources, technical or human. I have also said that, lacking a reasonable, systematic approach to this problem, the C.I.A. can't know if it is penetrated.

One could surmise the source of your confusion may be a Nov. 27 story, "U.S. Officials Find Immense Damage in Espionage Cases." There I am quoted regarding the scarcity of counterintelligence in the National Security Agency, not the C.I.A. Following that, is a comment by an anonymous "former senior intelligence official" from who-knows-what agency, who says flatly I am wrong.

I am not wrong. Had you probed further, you likely would have found

the source was not cleared for and was unfamiliar with the details of our technical systems and was also unable to grapple with the question of how the Soviets might use their knowledge of our systems to their advantage, and how we might use our knowledge of their knowledge to verify our "take."

This kind of "operational security" became something of a lost art in the human intelligence field in the 1970's and it has never really taken root in our technical intelligence field. In the Intelligence Authorization Act for 1985, Congress legislated a program for "operational security" on an interagency, interdisciplinary basis. But the intelligence community seriously resists quality control.

I trust that you and your readers might find it amusing that the unidentified "former senior intelligence official" abides by what appears to be a "once undercover, always undercover" principle. I do not, however, find it amusing that the comments of the same official surface without substantiation.

MALCOLM WALLOP
U.S. Senator from Wyoming
Washington, Dec. 3, 1985

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